

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

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FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2619

INFO USINT ALGIERS 169

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY RABAT

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C O N F I D E N T I A L NOUAKCHOTT 1167

EO 11652: ADS DECON AUGUST 30, 1974

TAGS: FPRO SS MR MO SP

SUBJECT: GIRM FOREIGN MINISTER LABELS SPANISH ANNOUNCEMENT
SAHARA REFERENDUM "A STEP FORWARD"

REF: NOUAKCHOTT 1142 AND 1145, USUN 2897

1. UPON RETURN FROM VISITS TO ZAIRE AND THE GAMBIA AUGUST 25, FORNMIN MOUKNASS INTERVIEWED BY RADIO MAURITANIE ON SPANISH SAHARA DEVELOPMENTS. MOUKNASS CALLED SPAIN'S ANNOUNCED INTENTION HOLD SAHARA INDEPENDENCE PLEBICITE "A STEP FORWARD (UN PASSAN AVANT)." IN SAME STATEMENT, FORNMIN ALLUDED TO MOROCCAN PRESS ATTACKS WHICH FOLLOWED RECENT GIRM REAFFIRMATION (NOUAKCHOTT 1145) ITS TERRITORIAL CLAIMS TO SPANISH SAHARA. MOUKNASS ACCUSED THE MOROCCAN PRESS OF ASSUMING A "DANGEROUS POSTURE," BUT REFUSED TO BE DRAWN INTO A VERBAL SLUGGING MATCH SAYING THAT HE WOULD NOT COMMENT ON THE COMPORTMENT OF A NEIGHBORING BROTHER ARAB STATE. RADIO INTERVIEW APPARENTLY CLEARED IN ADVANCE BY VACATIONING MAURITANIAN PRESIDENT OULD DADDAH, WHOM MOUKNASS VISITED IN NOUADHIBOU AUGUST 24.

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2. DURING AUGUST 26 MEETING WITH MOUKANSS ON OTHER SUBJECTS,

TOOK OPPORTUNITY RAISE SPANISH SAHARA ISSUE. MINISTER REITERATED GIRM TERRITORIAL CLAIMS TO SAHARA, BUT STATED HIS GOVERNMENT WOULD ACCEPT WILL OF SAHARAN PEOPLE EXPRESSED THROUGH PLEBICITE HELD UNDER UN AUSPICES AND CONTROL. MOUKANSS AVERRED HE HAD NOT YET STUDIED DETAILS SPANISH REFERENDUM PROPOSAL, BUT LABELED IT AS POSITIVE STEP. HE LABELED MOROCCAN MANEUVERING AS "PAS SERIEX" AND SAID GIRM WANTED AVOID BEING DRAWN INTO POLEMICS WITH RABAT ON SAHARA ISSUE.

3. COMMENT: MOUKNASS SHOWING SIGNS OF PERSONAL PIQUE AT MOROCCAN PRESS CAMPAIGN ON SAHARA ISSUE. THOUGH WE HAVE NOT SEEN MOST MOROCCAN PRESS STORIES HERE, UNDERSTAND ONE RABAT COMMENTATOR HAS ACCUSED MOUKNASS OF BEING TOOL OF SPANISH IMPERIALISM. NONETHELESS, PRESIDENT AND POWERFUL PARTY POLITICAL BUREAU HAVE OBVIOUSLY SET POLICY OF AVOIDING WIDE OPEN SPLIT WITH MOROCCO ON SAHARA ISSUE. GIRM STILL SEEMS TO BE BETTING THAT 29TH UNGA WILL STIFF-ARM MOROCCO AND BACK SAHARA PLEBICITE UNDER UN AUSPICES. REAFFIRMATIONS GIRM TERRITORIAL CLAIMS TO SAHARA, WHICH INVARIABLY FOLLOWED BY DEMANDS FOR UN-SPONSORED REFERENDUM, THEREFORE, HAVE HOLLOW, FOR-HOME-CONSUMPTION RING.
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